

October 2007

# RM News & Notes

## Safety Tip of the Day



**Aggressive driving** occurs when an individual commits one or a combination of moving traffic violations without regard to the rights or safety of others.

Recent polls indicate that motorists rate aggressive driving as the **No. 1** threat to highway safety, yet many drivers do not identify their own driving behavior as aggressive, so never try to correct it. Could you be part of the problem? Are you an aggressive driver?

### **Aggressive Driving Behaviors**

- Speeding
- Lane Blocking
- Tailgating
- Running red lights and stop signs
- Frequent and sudden lane changes
- Weaving in and out of traffic
- Failure to yield right-of-way
- Improper Passing
- Blocking an intersection
- Using the center turn lane to pass or passing on the shoulder
- Unnecessary use of the horn
- Flashing high beam headlights

## Columbia County Board of Commissioners Risk Management Department

630 Ronald Reagan Drive, Building B  
PO Box 498  
Evans, Georgia 30809  
Fax: 706-868-3301

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**Darlene M. Bartlett ARM**  
**Risk Manager**

706-868-3363

[dbartlett@columbiacountyga.gov](mailto:dbartlett@columbiacountyga.gov)

**Janice A. Matthews CPS/CAP**  
**Risk Management Assistant**

706-312-7475

[jmatthews@columbiacountyga.gov](mailto:jmatthews@columbiacountyga.gov)

**Web Page**

<http://www.columbiacountyga.gov/home/index.asp?page=2440>

## Message from the Risk Manager

I think it's getting harder and harder every day to drive around here. Between the traffic congestion, road construction and impatient drivers making very poor decisions, you begin to feel like you are putting your life on the line every time you get out there on the roadway. While we tend to think of ourselves as the "good" driver and others as the problem, if you look at the list of aggressive driving behaviors, perhaps we begin to realize that we may be contributing to the problems. I trust that you aren't a frequent aggressive driver and certainly not in a county vehicle (please, not in a county vehicle). But even if you only exhibit the occasional lapse in driving judgment, you still have to deal with aggressive driving behaviors and the effects. So take a minute and read through this newsletter. See if you find something you can put into practice to help you remain calm and controlled when you are out there driving. If we each make a small effort to improve our driving behavior, I think we may find that courtesy is just as contagious as aggression and we can see a tremendous impact on the safety of our roadways. So, calm down, stay focused and enjoy the ride.

*Darlene*

## Take Control

The only person who can control your actions and behavior behind the wheel is you. Reduce your own aggressive driving behavior and avoid confrontations with other aggressive drivers by taking and maintaining self-control. Other drivers may commit offenses that inconvenience you, make you mad or even put you in danger but you have the power to make your own decisions. Don't give up control of your driving to actions of others or emotional response. Find some way to maintain your self control so that when confronted with an aggressive driver, you can:

- **Get Out of the Way.** First and foremost make every reasonable attempt to get out of their way.
- **Put Your Pride Aside.** Do not challenge them by speeding up or attempting to hold-your-own in your travel lane.
- **Avoid Eye Contact.** Eye contact can sometimes enrage an aggressive driver.
- **Gestures.** Ignore gestures and refuse to return them.
- **Report Serious Offenses** You or a passenger may call the police. But, if you use a cell phone, pull over to a safe location.

On the other hand, improper response or trying to "get even" with an aggressive driver may escalate the situation and can quickly lead to **road rage**, which is a criminal offense and involves a violent act intending to do harm. Often, the roadway incident that caused the person to become enraged may have been something quite simple and even trivial. But because one or more drivers fail to maintain control, the trivial incident can lead to deadly consequences.

## Safety Officer News and Notes

### REDUCING AGGRESSIVE DRIVING HABITS

- **Plan Ahead.** Allow enough time to travel to your destination and be on time without rushing.
- **Concentrate.** Don't allow yourself to become distracted by talking on your cellular phone, eating, drinking or putting on makeup.
- **Relax.** Tune the radio to your favorite relaxing music. Music can calm your nerves and help you to enjoy your time in the car.
- **Drive the Posted Speed Limit.** Fewer crashes occur when vehicles are traveling at or about the same speed.
- **Identify Alternate Routes.** Try mapping out an alternate route. Even if it looks longer on paper, you may find it is less congested.
- **Use Public Transportation.** Public transportation can give you some much-needed relief from life behind the wheel.
- **Call Ahead.** If the unexpected happens and you are going to be late, pull over and call ahead so you can relax.
- **Just be Late.** If all else fails, just be late.
- **Emotions.** Don't drive when you are angry, upset or overly tired.
- **Comfort.** Make your personal space inside the vehicle comfortable.
- **Aggressive Driving Leads to More Aggressive Driving:** Be Courteous. Give other drivers the benefit of the doubt. Everyone makes mistakes. The more courtesy a driver shows, the more he or she gets back.
- **Personalize the Other Drivers.** Remember they are someone's family or friend. Perhaps they are sick or just received bad news.
- **Slowly County to Ten (or Twenty).** While you force yourself to county slowly, the adrenaline in your blood goes back down to normal levels. Take deep breaths as you do this.
- **Prioritize.** Think about the people who are waiting for you and put their interests above your desire "get back" at another driver.
- **Use Humor.** Think about a joke or make funny noises. Laughter releases stress and interrupts the chain of negative thinking.
- **Take a Break.** Getting out of the congestion for only a few minutes can relieve stress and give you a new perspective.
- **Remember – Driving is not a competition.** The only winners are those who reach their destination safely. Don't worry about the obnoxious or aggressive behavior of other drivers. Concentrate on maintaining control of yourself and your vehicle and driving safely.

## Safety Stories

I'm running low on safety stories, so instead of sharing one of the few remaining stories that don't relate to this month's topic, I decided to use this space to send out a plea. I know you all have "safety stories". If you have enjoyed or benefited from those printed during previous months, please consider sharing some of your own. Remember, you can write it up yourself or just call or e-mail me or Jan with the information and we'll put it together for you. We don't print names with the stories so you won't be embarrassing yourself in front of co-workers. We'll even give you a T-shirt and some other nice gift in appreciation of your participation if we use your story. Please help me out here. Thank you.

## Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to each employee of Columbia County and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

**Pre-registration is required.**

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

**Safety Review Board      October 11, 2007**

**Defensive Driving**

**Course – 8 hour      October 16, 2007**  
**November 8, 2007**  
**November 30, 2007**

**Defensive Driving**

**Course – 4 hour      October 9, 2007**

**CPR/AED/First Aid      October 25, 2007**

**County Office Closed      November 12, 2007**  
**November 22, 2007**  
**November 23, 2007**  
**December 24, 2007**  
**December 25, 2007**

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## Newsy Notes

- Tootsie Rolls were the first wrapped penny candy in America.
- Halloween candy sales average about 2 billion dollars annually in the United States.
- Chocolate candy bars top the list as the most popular candy for trick-or-treaters with Snickers #1.
- Halloween is the 2nd most commercially successful holiday, with Christmas being the first.

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